Castlemaine Naturalist

November 2010

Vol. 35.10 #382

Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Bird Orchid *Chiloglottis valida* photo - Noel Young

Mt Kaputar National Park

Rita Mills

Again we have been travelling north, again to Grafton, and again we found a different way, but mainly because we had less time and had a delivery to do for our son. This time there were even more wattles out along the roadsides, and though there wasn't so much time to stop on the way, we really enjoyed our drive. We drove through areas where there were crops flooded, swamps which had been cultivated were swamps again, and everywhere we looked there was water lying around. The novelty of this after years of drought was a joy in itself.

We got to Glen Innes in four days, so decided to stay put until we headed down to Grafton. This time the creek behind the Craigieburn Caravan Park was in spate when we arrived, and earlier in the afternoon we'd stopped at our favourite cuppa spot at the Swan Brook Rest Area between Inverell and Glen Innes on what is usually a pleasant, narrow stream, but it was in spate too this time, forming a very lively cataract over the rocky bar. It seems they had a real downpour in the area earlier in the day, and it looked at that stage as if our days in Glen Innes were going to be wet, but the weather cleared, and on the last afternoon I was sitting by the now much more quietly flowing creek behind our cabin when I spotted a bird in the tree not far from me. I thought it was a bowerbird at first, but bird book and binoculars proved it to be an Eastern Bristlebird.

On the way home our first night was at Bingara, and we decided, if the road was OK, that we would cut across to Narrabri through the northern end of the Mount Kaputar National Park' where I'd longed to go ever since first going through Narrabri nearly 20 years ago. My enquiries yielded the information that there had been a made road for the last five years, though we'd have to watch out for roaming cattle in a couple of places, so next morning we set off west instead of south. For the first few kilometres the scenery and vegetation reminded me rather of the western Warrumbungles. There was plenty to see in the way of flowers, especially wattles

and peas, and as we emerged onto the plain of a wide, cultivated valley with many large holdings Doug had to brake hard as an indignant Masked Lapwing raced toward us on the road in front of the car, wings outspread and warning us if we didn't back off he'd have us! He didn't appreciate Doug blowing the horn at him, and decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and flew off. It was as well that we were only dawdling or there would have been a fatherless Lapwing family.

This broad valley was surrounded by mountains, some of fantastic shapes, and I must admit the swathes of Pattersons Curse in front of huge paddocks of Canola in front of the mountains looked quite spectacular, as did the red Herefords and Black Angus cattle in the green paddocks. There were several fords across this plain, mostly the meanderings of Rocky Creek, and a couple of them had a lot of water in them, one of which we managed to hit at a bit too much speed, and found a bow-wave (?) spraying above the height of the car both sides! Doug approached the next one a bit more cautiously.

Soon we were winding our way through some fantastically shaped volcanic mountains, full of wildflowers, some which were familiar, such as Gorse Bitter-pea, Hardenbergia, and masses of Bluebells, but there were a number that I didn't know at all. One pea, which I thought could have been a Glycine, was very prevalent along the sides of the road on the higher places. I tried some photos of it, and of another one, also pink and white, but a shrub, and the flower quite different in form, along the walking track to the Sawn Rocks, but I still haven't identified either of them. There were lots of shrubs and climbers, quite a number of lilies and daisies, but I didn't find a single orchid. One plant I really liked was, I think, a Wonga vine, but with much larger flowers than my one at home, pale creamy-grey (sounds awful, but they were very attractive) with pale brown edges to the petals and mauve stripes inside the bell. I couldn't get a good photo as they were off the path, and I could only study them with the binocs. Frustration! My list for the Park reads, in part:

'Hardenbergia, sml leaf Clematis, another one with a larger leaf, Tall Bluebells, Choc. Lilies, Bulbine Lilies almost in f'l'r, Wattle Matrush, Bugle (Coastal?), Twining Glycine, Sm. Vanilla Lily (I think) , Bursaria spinosa (check), Grey Thrush, tiny white Daisy, A. Raven, R. Whistler, a wonga vine with....etc.'

As I said, frustration!

Sawn Rocks themselves are claimed to be 'one of Australia's best examples of the the geological formation known as organ-piping', and they are certainly spectacular. I would love to spend more time in this park, and visit the southern, Mount Kaputar section, but I'd need a good field guide to the plants of the area first!

Goolwa, South Australia - 27/8/10 – 3/9/10

Geraldine Harris

At the end of August, Anne, Hans, Helen, Chris, Geoff, and I spent a week in Goolwa SA, on our way to a macro-photography course at Gluepot Reserve. Goolwa is situated just north of the Coorong National Park. It had been wet prior to our visit but we did not know that we were just ahead of rains that would bring the most substantial flow of fresh water to the Coorong for years.

Our stay in Goolwa included visits to several Conservation Parks, The Goolwa Barrage and Hindmarsh Island, Nangawooka Flora Reserve, a walk around the historical buildings of Goolwa itself, and lots of bird watching (71 species).

At Scott Conservation Park there were lots of very large old river red gums, with numerous hollows and an interesting collection of birds that included close encounters with Purple-crowned, Musk and Rainbow Lorikeets, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes in the same old tree, and also Adelaide Rosellas and Elegant Parrots. We also found Veined Helmet Orchids *Corybas diemenicus* and a River Red Gum with a heart carved in it by a romantic Galah (see photo).

In the Cox's Scrub Conservation Park the plants of special interest were Blue Boronia *Boronia coerulescens*, Shrub Violet, Grevillea sp, Winged Spyridium, Myrtle Wattle, Gland Flower *Adenanthos terminalis* Twiggy Hibbertia, Blunt Daisy, Cup Gum *E cosmophylla* and Pink Gum *E fasciculosa*. During a lovely walk through the Ferries Macdonald Conservation Park we had to be careful not to tread on the White Daddy Long-leg Orchids *Caladenia capillata* as we photographed other flowers such as the Bluebeard Caladenia *Caladenia deformis*.

Visiting a hide across the road we listed Black swan, Great Egret, Grey Teal, Pacific Black Duck, White-faced Heron, and met a regular visitor to the area who could hardly contain her delight at seeing water back in this wetland area, which had been dry for a number of years.

At the Goolwa Barrage and surrounds – we added Purple Swamphen, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Mudlark, Pacific Black Duck, Little Pied Cormorant, Pelican, two Black Swans with four cygnets (which we watched later on diving for sea grass and feeding it to their young), Eurasian Coot, Australian White Ibis, Sacred Kingfisher, Whistling Kite with huge stick nests in the Norfolk Pines, Black-faced Cormorant, unidentified terns and an Intermediate Egret in beautiful breeding plumage. We also saw Australian Shelduck, Australasian Grebe, Hard head, Nankeen Kestrel, Masked Lapwing, Dusky Moorhen, White-faced Heron, Pied Cormorant, and Crested Grebe in the area.

At Malang we did more bird watching in front of a very picturesque group of brightly painted and well-loved beach cottages along the foreshore. And at Smith Reserve on the Bremer River we came across some muddy shallows and what we at first

thought were eels feeding but further inspection revealed very large carp like fish which Chris thought may have been Tench. Lunching at the Toderol Game Reserve we saw Singing Bush Larks and large numbers of Black-shouldered Kites with twelve perched in a single dead tree!

On Hindmarsh Island we added Sooty Oyster Catchers, Pied Oyster Catchers to our bird list and we watched NZ Fur Seals playing in the distance waving their flippers in the air. We also spent some time and trying to identify many tightly packed balls of vegetable matter that were washed up on the beach and scattered through the sand dunes – eventually we found someone who was able to identify them as the remains of sea sponges.

Our only wet day was spent exploring the Waitpinga Conservation Park where we found Orange bell Climbers and Maroonhoods, and the Deep Creek Conservation Park where we found a lovely collection of flowers along the track down to the creek. The highlight of the day was however a visit to Nangawooka Flora Reserve where we explored a wonderful collection of well labelled native plants that were very proudly cared for by volunteers from the Australian Society for Growing Australian Plants and Friends of Nangawooka. As we were the only people there and obviously enjoying ourselves despite the drizzling rain, we were approached by the camera team from "Postcard" and interviewed and filmed for their programme.

On our last day we revisited Cox Conservation Park and did a circuit walk through wonderful heathlands. That night we received a telephone message letting us know that our macro photography classes at Gluepot had been cancelled due to forecasts of heavy rains to come...

As we broke camp on Friday morning the rain started...
Hans and Anne set off for Wyperfield NP and Helen, Chris, Geoff and I headed home via the Grampians. On Saturday Helen and Chris left for Castlemaine but only made it as far as Moonambel where they had to spend the night, because there was so much water over the roads. On Sunday Geoff and I came home via Ararat because our usual route through Glenorchy was blocked off with much of Glenorchy evacuated. With waterways running fast and full, many large Red Gums had fallen along the roadways, swamps were filled with water for the first time in years, Cairn Curran's water was almost up to the tree line .... it was quite a journey home and a fitting end to a wonderful sojourn with nature and fellow naturalists.

Field Trip to the Byrne Property, Pilcher's Bridge 9/10/10

Rita Mills

Three years ago Tamsin first invited us to visit their property at Pilcher's Bridge. Last year a few of us visited on an extra field trip, but this year we at last made it the official one. As we left Castlemaine at 11, and Tamsin wouldn't be home until1pm after all, we stopped at the War Memorial at the crossroads at Sutton Grange for 20 minutes. There were fewer flowers than last year, but there was still a great show of Running Postman *Kennedia prostrata*, Several Golden Cowslips *Diuris behrii* and two or three Sutton Grange Greenhoods.

We got to the Byrne property about 10 to 12, and decided to explore the flat for a short distance, but leave it to Tamsin to show us her special treasures. The most important visit was to the huge old Red Box growing on the flat. Many of the branches almost reach the ground, and, as I have probably described before, one root crosses over another, making for a very comfortable laid-back specimen. I love it.

We were seated along the verandah, as we'd been invited to, eating our lunch while being entertained by the calls of the Rufous Whistlers when Tamsin arrived home. Soon after husband Patrick and daughters arrived too, and we all were made very welcome as we helped ourselves to a cuppa at the Urnie, and Tamsin showed those who hadn't already seen them the photos of the progress of the house and property from the time they had bought it.

Then out onto the flat again, and we were shown the tiny ferns called Adder's Tongues. Last year there were a few with, I think, only one with spores, but this year there were many. There were many tiny flowering plants, too, such as the Hairy Stylewort *Levenhookia dubia*, only a centimetre or two high, and Yellow Stars *Hypoxis sp.* There were a few Sutton Grange Greenhoods and Blushing Bindweed on the flat too, along with a number of plants that none of us could identify - mainly tiny ones. This area is slowly recovering from grazing and erosion in the past.

As we started to climb the hill where the fence runs alongside the forest we began to see more and more plants in flower; orchids, lilies, daisies, peas, wattles. Tamsin was a mine of information about the property, about what they were trying to achieve, what they were now finding on the property, what was being found on neighbours' properties. She obviously loves nature and the environment and is encouraging her daughters to take the same interest. As we walked up to the gate and back down the drive she explained what plantings they had done, and how long ago, and it was surprising just how much had been achieved since they moved in some ten or twelve years ago.

As we neared the house again Tamsin took us up onto the north facing slope above the house, and it was there that we began to really see Sutton Grange Greenhoods! Mind you, there were all sorts of plants there, but it was the Greenhoods that took our eye. Here were some wonderful healthy specimens, just waiting to be photographed! Tamsin explained that they seemed to grow in a swathe in one particular area. I wondered if it might be something to do with the type of soil there, or perhaps that was where the essential fungal mycorrhiza exists?

Quite a number of birds were seen and identified for the day, too - at Sutton Grange I only recorded Blackbird, Grey Shrike-thrush and Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, but on the Byrne property I added Rufous Whistler, Yellow-faced, Fuscous, New Holland and Brown-headed Honeyeaters, Striated and Yellow-rumped Thornbills, White-necked Heron and Superb Blue Fairy-wren.

The list of plants in flower I recorded at the Byrne property was - Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum*, Hairy Stylewort, Red Box *Eucalyptus polyanthemos*, Blushing Bindweed *Convolvulus angustissimus*, Tall Sundew *Drosera peltata ssp. auriculata*, Sutton Grange Greenhood *Pterostylis* sp affin *bicolor*, Yellow Star sp, Tall Riceflower *Pimelea linifolia*, Golden Cowslips *Diuris behrii*, Early Nancy *Wurmbea dioica*, Wax-lip Orchid *Glossodia major*, Daphne Heath *Brachyloma daphnoides*, Field Woodrush *Luzula campestris*, Native Primrose (or Native Pansy) *Goodenia blackiana*, Pink Fingers *Caladenia carnea*, Candles *Stackhousia monogyna*, Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*, Fairy (Bendigo if you must!) Wax *Philotheca verrucosa*, Rough Wattle *Acacia aspera*, Wirrilda *A. retinoides*, Spreading Wattle *A. genistifolia*, Golden Wattle *A. pycnantha*, Running Postman, *Kennedia prostrata,* Clustered Everlasting *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*, Chocolate Lily *Arthropodium strictum*, Milkmaids *Burchardia umbellata*, a small Veronica species, and two or three I can't work out! I can't read my own handwriting. And of course, there were the Adders Tongues.

It was a most enjoyable day, and very informative. Our thanks to Tamsin and her family. Perhaps we can visit again sometime?

Austral Adder's-tongue *Ophioglossum lusitanicum* and Sutton Grange Greenhood *Pterostylis* sp aff *bicolor* on the Byrne's property, Pilcher's bridge. [photos by Noel Young]

Botanical lists – Ararat and Maryborough

Richard Piesse

Ararat – town environs and Ararat Regional Park

Bulbine bulbosa	Bulbine lily
Dianella admixta	Black anther flax lily
Hypoxis glabella var.	Tiny Star
H vaginata var	Yellow Star
Wurmbea dioica	Common Early Nancy
Caladenia carnea	Pink Fingers
Diuris chryseopsis	Golden Moths
Cyanicula caerulea	Blue Caladenia
Pterostylis melagramma	Tall Greenhood
P nana	Dwarf Greenhood
P nutans	Nodding Greenhood
Chrysocephalum apiculatum	Common Everlasting
Leucochrysum albicans	Hoary Sunray
Microseris sp.	Yam Daisy
Ozothamnus obcordatus	Grey Everlasting
Senecio phelleus	Slender Groundsel
Hibbertia fasciculata	Bundled Guinea-flower
Drosera peltata ssp *auriculata*	Tall Sundew
D whittakeri ssp	Scented Sundew
Epacris impressa	Common Heath
Leucopogon virgatus	Common Beard-heath
Daviesia leptophylla	Narrow leaf Bitter-pea

Hovea heterophylla	Common Hovea
Kennedia prostrata	Running Postman
Geranium retrorsum	Grassland Crane's-bill
Goodenia blackiana	Blacks Goodenia
G geniculata	Bent Goodenia
Acacia acinacea	Gold dust Wattle
A melanoxylon	Blackwood
A paradoxa	Hedge Wattle
A pycnantha	Golden Wattle
Leptospermum myrsinoides	Heath Tea-tree
Oxalis sp	Wood-sorrel
Grevillea alpina	Downy Grevillea
G aquifolium	Variable Holly Grevillea
Correa reflexa	Common Correa
Stackhousia monogyna	Creamy Candles
Pimelia humilis	Common Rice-flower
Tetratheca ciliata	Pink Bells
Caladenia cucullata	Hood Orchid

This visit to Ararat was approximately three weeks later in September than last year - many more species in flower. Could be a possibility for a club September outing in the future.

Maryborough bushland south of the town and Paddys Ranges State Park - 4th October

Arthropodium strictum	Chocolate Lily
Dianella admixta	Black-anther Flax-lily
Wurmbea dioica	Common Early Nancy
Caladenia carnea	Pink Fingers
Glossodia major	Wax-lip Orchid
Diuris pardina	Leopard Orchid
Craspedia variabilis	Billy Buttons
Microseris sp	Yam Daisy
Xerochrysum viscosum	Sticky Everlasting
Hibbertia exutiacies	Spiky Guinea-flower
Drosera peltata ssp *auriculata*	Tall Sundew
Daviesia ulicifolia	Gorse Bitter-pea
Geranium affin *solanderi*	Austral Crane's-bill
Acacia acinacea	Gold-dust Wattle
A genistifolia	Spreading Wattle
A paradoxa	Hedge Wattle
A pycnantha	Golden Wattle
Eucalyptus tricarpa	Red Ironbark
Pimelia humilis	Common Rice-flower
Tetratheca ciliata	Pink Bells
Grevillea alpina	Downy Grevillea
Grevillea dryophylla	Goldfields Grevillea

Vale Shirley Parnaby

It was with sadness we learnt of Shirley Parnably's passing on October 7. She was a member from the early days of the club, after she and husband David returned to Castlemaine.

In her late 80s, Shirley only gave up giving us regular reports of the birds around her birdbath, and the area around her home, when she was about 81, and feeling that it was a bit beyond her, but we still got regular reports of when the Boobooks were back in the gardens - she used to send the pellets to one of her family who analysed them to find out what the birds were feeding on - and of her trips away, including a fantastic trip to visit a grand-daughter and her husband on the property they were managing on the NT/WA border, and of the thrilling helicopter ride she was given over the property during the muster to see all the bird-life on the many lagoons and waterholes.

Up to the last Shirley was interested in the environment and the family that had been so influenced by her and David's interest in nature and environmental concerns. She was very proud of her family, and of their achievements. There is more than one scientist among them. Shirley even has a bat species named in her honour.

Our sympathy goes out to David and the family.

- Rita Mills

An invitation to the Norman Wettenhall Foundation Tenth Annual Memorial Lecture

It is the tenth anniversary of Norman's death and the Annual Memorial Lecture series. We invite you to join us in remembering Norman and supporting his legacy, as well as taking part in an enthralling evening of discussion to be broadcast by ABC radio's Bush Telegraph program, moderated by Michael Cathcart.

Five expert panellists will speak on the topic "what would be the one thing they would do if they had the power to save the planet for as many species as possible", followed by discussion and questions from the audience. See more details on our website nwf.org.au under the lectures menu.

This year we are also holding an exhibition of Norman's photography. Limited edition prints will be available for sale and funds raised will assist the work of the foundation. Join us for food, drinks, art and socialising before the lecture.

Seats are limited and bookings are essential.
Contact beth@nwf.org.au 5472 1316

Friday 19th November 2010, 5.00 – 7.30 pm,
The Age Theatre, Melbourne Museum

Observations

- After Natalie's concern about the family of Blue Tongue Lizards disappearing since the heavy rain flooded them out, she told us they have returned
- At Barkers Ck, small stumpy tails seen again, Shrike Thrushes have fledged, and around 30 Little Wattlebirds seen – Dianne Thompson
- Rita Mills reports masses of wildflowers along the Smiths Reef Track from the dam to the Gower school
- Brown Goshawk gathering nesting material - Denis Hurley
- A Powerful Owl in the Botanical Gardens on Sunday 24th Oct – first one I have found since early winter – seen again on Nov 1st clutching a magpie chick. And at Glenluce Springs on 27th watched a solitary male Diamond Firetail for several minutes (photo) - Noel Young

- Chris Morris had a visit from a flock of about 70 Little Ravens!
- Denis Hurley reports a male Leaden Flycatcher building a nest, but no sign of a mate yet

Grovelling for Greenhoods

Noel Young

On 23rd October, a few of us assisted Terri Williams and Noel Muller (Parks Victoria) to scour likely new areas around Mt Tarrengower for any occurrence of the Sutton Grange Greenhood (*Pterostylis* sp affin *bicolor*) or the rarer *P biseta* (no common name) We were unsuccessful, perhaps not surprising as the the rains this year have promoted a lush crop of grasses and herbs in the likely open areas, making these diminutive orchids even harder to see than usual. Nevertheless it was an enjoyable morning among fields of Chocolate lilies, Bulbine lilies, Creamy Candles, Tall Sundews and Rice Flower. Other plants we found flowering included Milkmaid, Early Nancy, Billy buttons, Yam Daisy, Pink Fingers, budding Sticky Everlastings and a dense patch of the spectacular Greencomb Spider Orchids.

The most interesting finds of the day however, were several occurrences of the rare and vulnerable Clover Glycine *Glycine latrobeana* and a patch of a species of *Swainsona* (*behriana* - Darling pea ?) in flower, the latter having both purple and blue flowers. There was also an unusual Sundew I haven't seen before - very small but upright, presumably *Drosera glanduligera.*

Unusual finds around Maldon on October 23:

Top left – flower stalk of Clover Glycine *Glycine latrobeana*
Top right – Blue flowers of *Swainsona behriana* (?)
Lower left – Head of a *Pterostylis biseta*; cage-protected from grazing predators
Lower right – The tiny Scarlet Sundew *Drosera glanduligera*

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme
November 2010

Fri November 12 meeting: ELOISE SEYMOUR- the Moolort Wetlands

Sat November 13 field trip: Bells Swamp

Sat November 20 Broom pull: Botanical Gardens (nw area) 9 am (1 hr)

Sat December 4: Annual Bird Challenge Count – contact Chris Morris

Fri December 10 meeting: Members' night – Members "show and tell". Share a few photos, a nature experience, a poem – be as creative as you like. Slide and digital projectors available for use (Powerpoint or jpegs on either CD or USB key) Bring a plate – share supper.

Sat December 11 Christmas outing: Location to be advised

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 8.00 pm.
Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.
Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Denis Hurley's; 20 Merrifield St., at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2010
Ordinary membership: Single $27, Family $35
Pensioner or student: Single $24, Family $29
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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